

RE POLICIES FOR AUTISTIC PEOPLE IN TASMANIA

Dear Premier

At a recent meeting of the Management Committee of Action For Tasmanian Autistic Children (ATAC), it was decided that we should ascertain the policies of the three major parties on services to people with autism within Tasmania. With autism now affecting 1% of Tasmanians and expected to double in the term of the next parliament new policies are vital if we are to cope with this problem.

We are asking for your replies to the following questions so that we can distribute the undertakings of your parties throughout the autistic community by the end of February next.

1.

The American Academy of Paediatricians has just issued new recommendations to its members advising that they should screen all children for autism at 18 months and 2 years. This new policy of AAP recognises the importance of early intervention programmes for children with autism.

Will you introduce screening for autism in Tasmania for children at ages 18 months and 2 years?

2.

At the moment diagnosis in Tasmania is problematic, with a priority given to children under 7 years of age and with a 3 month waiting list.

Will your government establish AUTISM CLINICS in the four major hospital in Tasmania where those who are red flagged by the screening process can be directed for full diagnosis not only of autism, but of the many co-morbidities associated with autism (epilepsy, mental retardation, tubular sclerosis, other genetic problems, dyspraxia, A.D.H.D., anxiety disorders, gastro-intestinal and many others) to ensure that a holistic treatment plan that also covers such co-morbidities as well as for autism can be drawn up for each child?

3.

Will your government build early intervention centres in all regions of Tasmania with the capacity for outreach services so that all autistic children will be catered for?

Will you use the well established and most proven by research method of Applied Behavioural Analysis in the early intervention programmes for the children involved?

As it is now recommended that Behavioural programmes be used before drug therapy for ADHD and the effectiveness of ABA programmes for children with Developmental Delay will you include these children in early intervention programmes?

4.

Will you introduce remedial programmes for school children who have missed out on early intervention programmes? Such programmes to be held in withdrawal areas where special programmes to deal with the core deficits of communication, social problems and narrow interests can be addressed by qualified professionals and specially trained autism aides?

5.

Will your government provide special programmes for adult autistics to remedy the shocking employment prospects for them?

6.

Are there any other initiatives that your government plans to introduce for people with autism?

7.

Could you provide a timetable for implementation of your proposals for people with autism?

ATAC will close the date for replies on 22nd of February next so that we can ensure plenty of time to disseminate your replies throughout the community.

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